Strategic Intelligence and Civil Affairs to Understand Legitimacy and Insurgency

Diane E. Chido

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Avoiding the Stabilization Trap

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Diane E. Chido
DC Analytics
Erie, PA, USA

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This book is dedicated to the two most important men in my life, my beloved son, Zachary, and my beloved partner, Matthew. Thank you both for your endless love and support.

Foreword

I remember when I first arrived in Skopje, Macedonia, in 1994. Just a few blocks from the office building that housed the US mission (there was no embassy, yet) was a shopping district. Macedonia was the poorest of the former Yugoslav Republics and was embargoed from the south by Greece and asked to enforce sanctions to the north against Serbia.

Despite all this, in the middle of this shopping district, there were perhaps a dozen kiosks all selling gold. Each did a brisk business. Every day, dozens of people showed up, made their purchases, and left. Indeed, of all the shops in the market, these were among the busiest.

This surprised me. Amidst all the poverty, in the middle of a war, with factories shuttered, and enemies to both the north and south, who had the money or the interest to buy gold?

As I watched more closely, it became clear what was happening. Customers would bring wads of newly minted Macedonian Denars, well-travelled Deutsche Marks, or even US Dollars and exchange them for just a few links of gold. They weren't buying jewelry, they were preparing for when this latest experiment in governance failed.

Most of the Macedonians alive at that time had lived in three countries without ever changing address. The only economy that worked was the informal one. The only thing that was certain was that someone else was calling the shots—but that they were in the line of fire.

How does someone survive, take care of their children, their family, in such a situation? In a word—relationships. In these kinds of environments, you are either part of "us" or part of "them." If you are "us," then helping you makes us stronger, more resilient. If you are part of

"them," however, you are just a tool to be used or an enemy to be thwarted by any means possible.

Stability is much less common than those in the developed world would like to admit. In unstable environments, where relationships matter most, what gets done is less important to the local players than who does it. Breaking promises to support me and mine is not only allowed, it is expected.

Failure to understand and appreciate the role of relationships in stability operations has very real costs. In other countries in similar situations, I have seen shops full of reasonably priced goods despite government promises to enforce sanctions or embargoes. I have had local bankers, once I got to know them, tell me that they quite literally made up all the numbers they briefed so convincingly the day before to international investors. I have even had our putative allies sign contracts with their putative enemy, while they were talking to me (unaware that I read and spoke the local language).

Diane Chido knows all of this. She has spent decades working, understanding, travelling, and living in foreign countries. More importantly, she has spent almost as much time studying the cultures, tribes, languages, economies, leaders, and people that make up much of the unstable part of the world. Her observations are informed by both experience and research and are the better for it.

Is this to say that this slim volume is the final word on the topic? No. But it is a useful addition to the debate. The dangers of an unstable world are too numerous and dire to ignore. As the pace of technology quickens and threats proliferate, there is no excuse for not challenging conventional wisdom and recasting our mental models of how the world really works. In these two things, this monograph succeeds admirably.

Department of Intelligence Studies
Mercyhurst University
Erie, PA, USA

Kristan J. Wheaton

Preface

The purpose of this study was to delve into the *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction*, particularly the entwined issues of Stable Governance and Social Well-Being as they appear not from the policy-maker perspective, but from that of the population upon whom policies are enacted. This monograph recommends that the US begin to identify opportunities for enhancing legitimacy by supporting some types of alternative governance it otherwise might view as threats to state authority, failing to recognize that hierarchical, centralized states are not the only effective governing structures. The Army should enhance and redirect its strategic intelligence and Civil Affairs capabilities toward these efforts.

Erie, PA — Diane E. Chido

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About the Book

This book describes the common pitfalls of US military interventions in efforts at stabilization, which supports post-conflict societies by establishing stable governance, rule of law, a safe and secure environment, economic development, and social well-being for all members of the population. These efforts are often unsuccessful and can even cause harm when mission teams do not understand the populations with whom they are interacting and when policymakers, who also lack this knowledge, fail to plan appropriate strategy and missions. The book recommends prioritizing a relational approach to stabilization with a professional and well-resourced Civil Affairs and strategic intelligence approach to engagements over the current preference for transactional, often lethal operations.

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About the Author

Diane E. Chido is founder of Erie, PA-based research firm, DC Analytics, and a former faculty instructor and project advisor for the Mercyhurst University Department of Intelligence Studies. Diane recently completed a three-year contract serving as the Security and Intelligence Policy Advisor to the US Army's Peace Keeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) housed at the US Army War College in Carlisle, PA. Diane has over 25 years of experience supporting post-conflict and fragile societies, beginning as a research assistant with the Brookings Institution's Foreign Policy Program working on Russia's early transition to democracy and on African development. At the International Monetary Fund in the mid-1990s, she participated in numerous economic reporting missions to Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. She has published and lectured widely on topics related to alternative governance, intelligence, legitimacy, security, sociocultural issues, stabilization, security sector assistance and reform, telecommunications, and the challenges of the dense urban environment.

Abbreviations

COO	Center for Complex Operations
CPS	Criminalized Power Structures
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DNI	Director of National Intelligence
DoD	US Department of Defense
DoDD	Department of Defense Directive
DoS	US Department of State
EU	European Union
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
JCIC	Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning
JP 3-24	Joint Operations Doctrine on Counterinsurgency
MNLA	Movement for the National Liberation of Azawad
MOE	Measure of Effectiveness
MOP	Measure of Performance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDS	National Defense Strategy
ODNI	Office of the Director of National Intelligence
PKSOI	Peace Keeping and Stability Operations Institute
SAR	Stabilization Assistance Review
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
UN	United Nations
UNMINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
USAFRICOM	US Africa Command
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USG	US Government

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Introduction

Abstract When the US commits to stability operations, it must focus on long-term legitimacy to prevent falling into the *Stability Trap*. Despite substantial doctrine, policy, and historical examples attesting to the complexities of stabilization, the US Army tends to have an oversimplified view of stability as a *transactional* series of short-term tasks; conversely, for the state it is supporting, stabilization is a long-term *relational* process of rebuilding its legitimacy with the people and reestablishing governance. Rarely are US policymakers, including military leaders, willing or able to plan for the long-term development of these relationships between post-conflict states and their societies. This monograph recommends that the US Army begin to identify opportunities for enhancing legitimacy by supporting some types of alternative governance it otherwise might view as threats to state authority, failing to recognize that hierarchical, centralized states are not the only effective governing structures.

Keywords Stability • Legitimacy • Governance • Alternative governance • Strategic intelligence • Civil Affairs

When the US commits to stability operations, it must focus on long-term legitimacy to prevent falling into the *Stability Trap*. This challenge is similar to the *Liberator's Dilemma* described by LTC Joseph Long, Chief of Special Forces Proponency, in which "responsibility for a population inherently transfers from the original governing body to the liberating military forces." In his treatise on guerrilla leadership, LTC Long further

noted, "Negative framing can result in unanticipated audience costs that reduce trust and increase tension between forces reliant on long-term American support and create a reputation where the U.S. continues to make false promises."[1] Therefore, foreknowledge and situational understanding are likely to go a long way to reduce this tendency toward false promises, thus increasing the Stabilizer's legitimacy before and after action and thus its likelihood of establishing long-term stability.

Despite substantial doctrine, policy, and historical examples attesting to the complexities of stabilization, the US Army tends to have an oversimplified view of stability as a *transactional* series of short-term tasks; conversely, for the state it is supporting, stabilization is a long-term *relational* process of rebuilding its legitimacy with the people and reestablishing governance. Rarely are US policymakers, including military leaders, willing or able to plan for the long-term development of these relationships between post-conflict states and their societies.

This monograph recommends that the US Army begin to identify opportunities for enhancing legitimacy by supporting some types of alternative governance it otherwise might view as threats to state authority, failing to recognize that hierarchical, centralized states are not the only effective governing structures. Understanding the sources of legitimacy, vulnerabilities within a state will also enable *Stabilizers* to identify what sort of alternative governance structures are likely to arise when the state does not have the trust of the population and how and whether to counter, coopt, or cooperate with them. Within the construct of "the state," this monograph views any political entity from a municipal, to a provincial, to a federal unit claiming sovereign authority over a defined population in a structure granted legitimacy by the Western model of democracy.[2]

Outsiders are likely to have difficulty understanding the complex social networks, incentives, and motivations that underlie these alternative forms of legitimacy, making it nearly impossible to determine with whom to negotiate to further US goals. In 1998, sociologist James C. Scott dubbed this Western inability to understand "illegibility"[3]; an apt term for this lack of capacity to "read" unfamiliar populations. US operatives must be able to gauge the amount and forms of power that members or leaders of such structures wield in actuality, as opposed to assurances they may give—especially in a climate of shifting alliances. This is where the role of an effective Civil Affairs (CA) capability is crucial. Throughout the long, turbulent American history of stabilization, which specifically requires the skills that

only CA can bring to consolidating gains made through combat, CA has struggled to find its niche and ideal structure. This problem continues today.

Defense policy's framing of threats has coopted today's military intelligence capability to only look for operational threats and to identify, profile, and find artificially inflated "high-value targets" even in noncombat operational theaters. The resulting deaths of countless people since 2001 in at least 130 countries[4] have not enhanced understanding of sources of legitimacy and local grievances but have likely increased the latter.

In her 2011 report advocating for a school of military government, Rebecca Patterson of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) emphasized the traditional roles of strategic intelligence that have largely been lost in the current military intelligence environment, which now focuses on targeting. She recommended reviving, "An additional intelligence capability—one that provides early warning of civil unrest, study of politics and economics of specific areas of probable military concern, and analysis of key indicators that may illustrate a propensity for conflict."[5] This study supports that view and proposes developing an analytic toolkit for beginning to develop this shared capability within and between a better resourced Civil Affairs and resurrected Strategic Intelligence Analysis components.

Notes

1. Joseph Long, "Framing Indigenous Leadership," *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*. March 2017, p. 250. Available from https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.46.2936 accessed on May 22, 2018.
2. For more on the definition of a state and the concept of "softened sovereignty," see Anne L. Clunan and Harold A Trikunas, "Conceptualizing Ungoverned Spaces: Territorial Statehood, Contested Authority, and Softened Sovereignty," in Clunan and Trikunas eds., *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010, pp. 17–33.
3. James C. Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.
4. Andrew Cockburn, *Kill Chain: The Rise of the High-Tech Assassins*, New York, NY: Picador, 2015, p. 251. This number of 130 countries is a conservative estimate as Cockburn asserts that by 2015 such assassinations were taking place in over 120 countries and then relates how drone bases

have expanded since 2014. The estimate for this study only adds 10 to Cockburn's 120, but many other sources state the number is closer to 160.

5. Rebecca Patterson, "Revisiting a School of Military Government: How Reanimating a World War II-Era Institution Could Professionalize Military Nation Building," Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, June 2011, p. 18. Available from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1879444 accessed on May 7, 2018.